DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 318 041 CS 507 069

AUTHOR Nance, Teresa A.
TITLE More Than Just Style and Delivery: Recasting Public Speaking Courses for African American Students.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 36p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (75th, San Francisco, CA, November 18-21, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Education; *Black Students; Cultural Awareness; Cultural Context; *Cultural Influences; Cultural Pluralism; Educational Philosophy; Higher Education; Models; *Multicultural Education; *Public Speaking; *Speech Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Black Communication

ABSTRACT

Recognizing that too often, African American students in communication courses are confronted with communication principles which to them seem inappropriate, unrealistic, and simply false, this paper analyzes the conceptual foundation of the public speaking course and suggests how it might be made more relevant for African American students. The paper is in four sections. Following an introduction, the first section examines the prevailing educational philosophy currently guiding public speaking courses, identifies the shortcomings of this approach for meeting the needs of the African American student, and offers a more responsive and appropriate philosophic alternative. The second section suggests how a culturally sensitive public speaking course (adaptable to all students of difference) might be developed. The paper then describes an approach to public speaking which engages students in a process of developing speeches within various cultural contexts. And finally, a brief concluding section points out that the unique qualities African American students bring to the classroom should be a great resource to a teacher, to the other students, and to the colege/university; that the differences among students should be celebrated by recognizing them and using them to enhance knowledge of subject areas; and that a true celebration of classroom differences validates not only the experience of African American students but of any student who perceives herself or himself to be somehow out of step with other members of the class. Twenty-three references are attached. An appendix contains a model for designing culturally sensitive communication courses. (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED318041

MORE THAN JUST STYLE AND DELIVERY:

RECASTING PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSES FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

TERESA A. NANCE
VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE SCA ANNUAL MEETING

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

NOVEMBER 18-21, 1989

CS507069

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TERESA A. NANCE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

INTRODUCTION

Over twenty-two centuries ago Aristotle told us to analyze our audience. He was right about a lot of things so I suspect he knew what he was talking about regarding the role of audience in the communication process. Specifically, he pointed out the interactive value of the process, the interdependence of both parties in any communication episode. With that advice, let us begin:

FACT #1 The average expected lifetime earnings of African American men is only 56% of white men. (Chronicle of Higher Education, April 2, 1989 p.4)

FACT #2 Thirty per cent of all African Americans (compared to 10% of white Americans) live in poverty. (Chronicle of Higher Education, April 2, 1989 p. 4)

FACT #3 African American unemployment and underemployment remains a problem. . . even when compared to other ethnic groups. Black unemployment is at 12% while Hispanic employment is 9% and 4.5% for whites. (Rosenberg, 1988 p. 44)

Why should a paper about public speaking begin by outlining the social and political realities of African Americans. The answer is quite simply, that these are the circumstances African American students bring with them into the college classroom. Circumstances that must be accounted for if teachers are to be truly responsive to the needs of the particular population.

public speaking course about? No discussion of pedagogical content or practice makes much sense outside of a philosophical and historical context. As teachers, whether we recognize it or not, our classroom practices spring from some higher level operating principle, . . . an educational philosophy in one form or another.

An educational philosophy provides teachers with a framework within which various pedagogical practices become both organized and sensible. Within our own field a teacher's pedagogical practices guided by the pragmatism of John Dewyy would be vastly different than those of a teacher guided by the idealism of Plato. One would expect an emphasis on practical performance in Dewey's classroom and an emphasis of theoretical ideals in the Plato classroom.

While many teachers in the classroom today would be hard pressed to identify the specific educational philosophy driving their courses, an analysis of the course content and course practices allow conclusions about operating philosophies to be drawn. In this section of the paper I will examine the prevailing educational philosophy guiding public speaking courses currently being taught and will identify the shortcomings of this approach for meeting the needs of the African American student. I will conclude by offering a more responsive and appropriate philosophic alternative.

Educational Philosophy of a Typical Public Speaking Course

The periodic review of the basic course in speech

More facts: When compared to white college students African American students:

> --are severely disadvantaged in terms of persistence rates;
> --have lower academic achievement levels
> --are less likely to enroll in advanced degree programs;
> --and experience greater overall psychosocial adjustment.
> (Allen, 1988 p. 403)

If as educators in post secondary school institutions we accept the responsibility of providing all of our students equal opportunities to learn and succeed, then it becomes incumbent upon each of us to assess critically who these students are. In other words, as Aristotle tells us, to thoroughly analyze our audience. Why? So that we may then address the more crucial problem--the one over which we exert exclusive control--the teacher/student learning environment that should theoretically address the needs of any particular audience.

Public speaking is a staple of our discipline; the most basic of the basic courses. (Gibson, 1985) We speech teachers feel rightly or wrongly that the lessons honed from the course contribute greatly to a student's academic success (Rubin and Graham, 1988) and professional success (Johnson and Szczupakiewicz, 1987).

Now, given the significance of the public speaking course and the difficulties confronting African American students in school and in life, the purpose of this paper is to consider the place of the public speaking course in the educational development of African American students.

PHILOSOPHY

Let me begin, then by asking the question, "What's the

communication by Gibson et.al (1985) provides a useful point of departure in any attempt to identify the educational philosophy underlying typical public speaking courses.

{Note: All basic courses are not public speaking. Most are, however. This survey does provide information specifically about the public speaking course.}

The top ten topics receiving the greatest amount of attention in public speaking courses (in order) include:

1. informative speaking
2. persuasive speaking
3. delivery
4. supporting materials
5. outlining
6. audience analysis
7. listening
8. speech anxiety
9. reasoning
10. language

Interestingly, topics reported but not ranking in to top ten include ethics, rhetorical criticism and communication theories.

{The information about general course practices was not broken out by course orientation. In other words, the course practices were not just derived from public speaking courses.}

Also identified are some classroom practices generally followed in typical basic courses. Two observations about practice are most significant in extracting an operating philosophy:

--the majority of basic courses, 51% devote a major portion of their class time to performance rather than theory.

--62% of all basic courses weigh oral activities more heavily than written assignments.

Taken together these observations indicate that the fundamental purpose of the public speaking course is to teach students to perform the act of delivering informative and persuasive speeches in front of classroom audiences.

The key term in this conclusion is performance. The emphasis on performance is probably what is most obvious from the

Gibson summary. A majority of basic course teachers reported spending more class time on performance than theory and weighed more heavily oral assignments than written assignments. It is reasonable to conclude from these facts that public speaking classrooms are places where students learn through performance.

A review of popular textbooks used in public speaking courses reveals a similar orientation. (Note: all the books and instructors manuals used in this section were identified in Gibson's 1985 survey as most used by teachers of basic courses.) Verderber in The Challenge of Effective Speaking wrote, "Your goal in this course is to become a better speaker." (Verderber, p. 19)

The other leading textbooks public speaking teachers use, also support this orientation. "The material presented in this textbook reflects a series of assumptions concerning how you best prepare for an active and effective life of speaking. . ." (Ehninger et. al. 1983 p. 22) "Your speech class will give you training in researching topics, organizing your ideas, and presenting yourself skillfully. This training if invaluable for every type of communication." (Lucas, 1988 p. 22) It should be noted that these texts offer students a rich array of theoretical background material in addition to their clearly stated emphasis on performance.

A very quick overview of public speaking as taught in colleges and universities in the United States shows clearly that in class structure, practice and text there exists an emphasis on performance. What does this mean philosophically?

Briggs and Pinola (1988) identify five traditional

educational philosophies impacting most directly on speech communication classrooms. The philosophies include idealism, realism, existentialism, Neo-Thomism and Experimentalism. It would seem that given the emphasis on performance in our public speaking classes it would be easy to fix the underlying spirit of public speaking as fundamentally experimental. Experimental teachers, "believe one's concrete experience yield's knowledge and ideas and that subsequent concrete experience may deny or confirm these results." (Briggs & Pinola, 1988 p. 312)

It might be argued that because public speaking students deliver a number of different kinds of speeches in front of a live audience who (presumably) give some kind of feedback, that our students are learning the subject matter of the course through the various experiences public speaking teachers structure throughout the semester. These experiences could be said to function as experiments for the students....they learn from their successes and failures how to improve their behavior for the next time.

The problem with this approach lies in the difference between what's suppose to happen and what happens. It is true public speaking students have structured experiences (4-6 on average per semester (Gibson et. al. 1985); what is not true is that they are learning from <u>their own</u> experiences of the exercise. What is true is that they are suppose to learn from <u>our</u>, the professional teacher of public speaking, interpretation of their experience.

Think about what happens. A student stands up to give a

basic semester opening demonstration speech. Let's say that she is talking about stenciling. During the speech she paints one stencil after another. She talks about the beauty of stenciling, she talks about how she learned about stenciling and she talks about the personal fulfillment of creating one's own stencil. During the speech she never identifies the exact steps or procedures for doing a stencil After eliciting the usual class comments of how nice the speech is, the teacher might remind the student that according to her textbook, " the demonstration speech is one in which a speaker describes to an audience the steps involved and the physical and mental skills required to carry out a certain task." (Ehninger et. al. p. 288) Thus the creation of steps or the identification of specific techniques becomes a criteria (a teacher-text) criteria the student is given by which to evaluate her experience. Realize other criteria also exist for evaluating this speech. The important point to be made here is that the student is not directly learning from the experience of her presentation; rather, her experience is being interpreted for her. It is being reframed for her by some rather explicitly established rules of behavior.

In this case, the student had order, coherence, logic--but it didn't "count". Why? Because the teacher did not recognize it as order. The teacher assumed no order because she was ignorant of the student's way of ordering material. Consequently, the teacher assumed that there was no order. This assumption effectively does six things:

(1) causes the teacher to correct the student
(2) invalidates the student's experience of a

job well done
(3) confuses the student
(4) leads to the creation of a social identity of the student as one who doesn't think "clearly" or "logically"
(5) allows this label to become a filter through which the teacher interprets everything the student does
(6) no future behavior of the student can then discount the negative label.

Rather than experimentation it would seem that the philosophy generally underlying the practice of the public speaking teaching process is realism. Realists believe that, " a material world exists outside of the mind and we should strive to determine what actually exists rather than vague ideas of what exist." (Briggs and Pinola, p. 308.) The external world becomes known to us through the conduct of empirical research. Thus the goal of educational realist is to discover this material world through empirical methods and then teach the world to students. Is this not how we teach the "truth" about public speaking these days? "Students are encouraged to be creative but the results of their creativity are scrutinized carefully in relation to the external world." (Briggs and Pinola, p. 308) This practice has serious implications for any students but especially for culturally different students

Realism and the African American Student

African American students as a whole are <u>not</u> doing well in many of our colleges and universities today. The reasons for their difficulties are numerous and complex. (Allen 1987, 1988, Lang, 1988)

As one reads the literature on African Americans

students in higher education --especially in predominantly white institutions--reasons behind some of problems become clear.

Allen (1988a) summarizes a series of studies that discuss the academic difficulties of African American students and finds many of these difficulties are attributable to students' feelings of isolation, alienation, and lack of support. (p. 405) Smith et. al. (1986) state explicitly, "Basically, Black students view the institution as being hostile. The institutions seems to say, 'you must conform to the cultural values that are dominant here'. These non-Black cultural values are much in evidence. (p. 55)

The indictment being made here is not meant as a personal attack on teachers in general or Public speaking teachers in particular. The indictment is leveled against a system which molds our educational choices in such a way that we alienate culturally different students. McDermott & Gospondinoff (1978) put it best when they write, "Our problem is neither racist teacher nor dumb kids. Our problem is that our school systems are set-up to have conscientious teachers function as racists and bright little children function as dopes even when they are all trying to do otherwise. (Wolfgang, p. 198)

Teachers act like "racist" when they disregard the experiences of their culturally different students as inconsistent, irrelevant or just plain wrong. Student function as "dopes" when they use their culturally different behaviors in an education environment that recognizes only one style of response as legitimate. This problem is pervasive.

Anderson in his article, "Cognitive Styles and Multicultural Populations" observes:

> It does not take an incoming student of color long to realize that the university or college does not actually value cultural diversity in a practical sense. . .The problems, to a degree, reflect an inability by the persons of color to adapt to new demands and expectations, but the problem just as often stems from the tendency of majority group member to reject any cultural style which is not Anglo-European, or has not been decreed as valuable by them. (p. 3)

"Racists" and "dopes" are thus not born but created by the educational policies and procedures that do not actually attend to student difference while promoting student indifference.

Anderson demonstrates through his review of the literature that what is at the root of the difference between ethnic/cultural groups is a fundamentally different way of viewing the world and a fundamentally different way of learning about the world. (Anderson, 1988, p. 4)

Shade (1982) in attempting to identify an African American world view concludes:

> The Afro-American Weltanschauung (or world view) is that people within one's environment should be approached with caution, wariness and a sense of distrust. . . individuals who are a part of Afro-American culture are taught at an early age to be wary of people and systems with their environment. (p. 220-221)

Some have argued that this suspicious quality of African Americans' world view is the result of living in a society where color remains a significant factor in most social situations. Regardless of its origin, the African American world view becomes an important dynamic in establishing and maintaining classroom relationships. It should be noted here that the "suspicious" quality identified here does not register as abnormal"

on traditional psychological tests of personality. The point here is that compared to average Americans African Americans tend to be more suspicious and guarded. (Shade 222)

Given this fundamental orientation to the world, African Americans process information from the environment differently than other groups. Shade's synthesis of previous research done in this area (Hilliard, 1976) finds five such distinct differences. She reports that African Americans:

1. tend to view things in their environment in entirety rather than in isolated parts
2. seem to prefer intuitive rather than deductive or inductive reasoning
3. tend to approximate concepts of space, number and time rather than aiming at exactness or complete accuracy
4. prefer to attend to people stimuli rather than non social or object stimuli and
5. tend to rely on nonverbal as well as verbal communication (p.222)

These differences in processing information take on special significance when African Americans enter school systems. Success in American educational systems is best achieved if the way student process information can be characterized in the following way:

1. An attention style that focuses on the task itself, rather than on the people in the situation.
2. An abstraction ability that separates ideas and concepts into parts and reweaves them into a unified whole.
3. A perceptual style that leads to the abstraction of both obvious and unobvious attributes that seemingly link things, ideas or principles.
4. A perceptual style that facilitates the extraction of important information embedded in distracting influencers.
5. A long attention span with prolonged concentrating ability.

6. An attending preference for verbal cues rather than nonverbal cures.
7. A reflective rather than an impulsive response style in problem solving.
8. A highly differentiated or analytical thinking style that leads to abstract and logical reasoning. (Shade, 232)

When one compares the two lists just given, one fact stand clear: African Americans' way of knowing the world is largely inconsistent with the information processing style preferred by American schools.

If teachers do not recognize these learning differences or fail to see such differences as significant or believe that difference is irrelevant and that it is solely the students' responsibility to adjust to the learning environment then African American students and in fact any students of differences can expect to fail. The evidence of this point can be found in the abysmal attrition rates of African American students from institutions of higher education.

The point here is not that all African American student are incapable of adjusting to traditional educational ways of knowing. Many can and are successfully completing college programs. The point is that for the most part, African American students ability to complete school may not be a measure of their intelligence, desire to learn or will to succeed. Their success in our colleges and universities is much more a measure of their ability to successfully master the college/university "way" of being. (Smith et.al. p. 54)

In terms of educational philosophy, classroom practices which stress performance in keeping with mainstream models are sustained by a philosophy of realism. Is realism an appropriate philosophy

for educating African American students? Before answering that question let me make an observation.

The realism which underlies much of what we do in public speaking would be categorized by Weiller (1988) as a traditional reproduction theory. Traditional in that it sees the current structure of society as suitable and desirably arranged and reproductive in that it seeks to maintain social gender and class relationships as they currently exist.

Given the significant differences in the way African Americans process information, the unique quality of the African American world view and the compelling evidence suggesting African American students psychological dissatisfaction in college any philosophy supporting the status quo is an inappropriate choice.

Realism as a traditional reproductive theory promotes classroom procedures which at best ignore cultural differences and at worst penalize students for acting in concert with these differences. Educational procedures appropriate for African American students and other students of difference must be guided by a philosophy of change.

Speech communication educators have a real choice in selecting an operating philosophy. We can stay with our current philosophy which compels student conformity or move on to a philosophy and a set of classroom procedures which respects students as different individuals.

In the next section of the paper I will suggest how a culturally sensitive public speaking course might be developed which might be more responsive to the needs of African American

students.

PUBLIC SPEAKING REFRAMED

Though the title of this paper suggests that I will be developing a model of public speaking for African American students, the model of public speaking I am proposing is adaptable to all students of difference. Because of space and time limitations, I will be concentrating my examples on African American students.

When a teacher begins the process of structuring or restructuring any course the three basic ingredients with which she begins are her students, her course material and the procedures for bringing the students and the material together. These three ingredients also function as the three main components of a culturally sensitive public speaking course.

African American Students in Public Speaking

There was a time when speech communication teachers with African American students in class thought only about how to manage that troublesome dialect issue. Were it so simple! We tell our students in public speaking to know their audience before beginning the process of putting together a speech. Shouldn't we, as their teachers do the same? A teacher is prepared to teach African American students when she understands the learning history African American students bring with them into the classroom.

Learning History

A student's learning history is an important piece of

information for teachers, especially teachers in post secondary schools institutions to understand. Students come to college classroom with sets of expectations, behaviors and experiences gathered from previous years in school. In fact, a learner's history begins long before she or he sits in a classroom for the first time. Bloom (1976) suggests that how children take information from adults in their environment is the real beginning of a learner's history.

What this previous conditioning is or how it impacts on students' ability to learn is not information college level teaching professionals usually take time to learn. The assumption is that students learn. Consistent with this assumption is that how students learn is not relevant and what students learn can be measured on a written examination or evaluated in an oral presentation.

Perhaps one of the reasons college teaching professionals could get away with assuming that students just learn is because of the perceived homogeneous nature of their audiences. Even after the doors of American colleges and universities were opened and the audience changed, however, the fundamental assumptions determining appropriate classroom operation seemed to remain the same. It is only now that we are facing the challenge of the multicultural classroom that many of the old assumptions are being challenged.

African American students bring to the classroom learning characteristics arising out of their own culture and experiences. Shade (1982) observes that . . .

> these entry characteristics seem to consist of a preference for people-oriented situations and for spontaneous and novel stimuli and situations, an ability to understand nonverbal communication, and a highly affective orientation toward ideas, things, situations, and individuals. (p. 237)

The characteristics listed above could generate some useful insights for teachers of public speaking. First, as learners, African American students will probably be more tuned into the teacher than the material. Anderson (1988) writes that, "performance (is) influenced by authorizing figures expression of confidence or doubt." (p 6.) Consequently, pleasing the teacher more likely will prove to be motivation for learning than conquering the material.

In public speaking classes, teachers are in a unique position of overtly commenting on a variety of classroom behaviors. After speeches most of us comment aloud on the performances of the students. Since African American students are heavily invested in a student-teacher relationship, it is imperative that teachers make clear that criticisms of performance are not criticisms of the person. Teachers must seek to provide positive reinforcement to African American students when possible and in an appropriate manner.

Second, African American students will focus on nonverbal as well as verbal signs of teacher supportiveness. The fact that African American students pay close attention to nonverbal communication signals has long been established. (Wolfgang, 1979) While this ability can add a most creative dimension to African American students public speaking presentations, it should also put public speaking teachers on notice. African American

students attend closely to nonverbal messages. Inconsistencies between verbal messages ("That was a really nicespeech.) and nonverbal messages (I never heard such a disorganized mess.) are not easily overlooked.

Third, African American students respond best to learning environments which are multidimensional and innovative. Studies completed with African American children found them most able to attend to multiple sources of stimuli. In fact, Boykin (1979) found African American children did much better on learning tasks if the formats had high variability. (Shade, p. 229) What does this mean to teachers? African American students bore easily in traditional classroom formats and with traditional classroom tasks. A lecture-recitation format will probably not stimulate their best performance. Alternatives to traditional classroom methods are limited only by a teacher's imagination.

Fourth, the highly affective orientation characteristic of African American students is not just limited to people. African American students also become emotionally attached to ideas and issues. Public speaking teachers should be aware of this tendency as criticism of topics and arguments are generated. Once again, it it imperative that the teacher recognize that when African American students speaks about affirmative Action programs or South Africa there may be strong emotional ties to these issues. Teachers should recognize the possibility that students may read criticisms of their performances as rejection of the issue, a denial of the speaker as a person, and perhaps even prejudice against all African Americans. Teachers must be

sensitive to these kind of situations before they reach the point of name calling. When students are asked to talk about significant political and social issues, teachers should expect the immediacy of those issues to increase the likelihood of intense emotional responses. Critiques of speeches should be done with care. Teachers should acknowledge the emotional nature of the topic and the students' personal investment in it. Then teachers should separate clearly criticisms of form, structure and evidence from the issue itself. Certainly the style of rendering a critique in this case is as important as the critique itself.

These observations are not presented as the only ones to be drawn about the learning history of African American students. They are presented, however, as a recognition that teachers must consider who students are and how students learned previously, if learning goals are to be accomplished.

Public Speaking Practices: Possibility Not Just Process

For many of us teaching the public speaking course is a bit routine. In this section of the paper I'd like to reconsider some of our standard classroom practices in light of the African American student experience.

Earlier we established that as reported in the literature and surmised from textbooks, our public speaking courses tend to focus on performance. Overall the basic structure of a typical public speaking course might be organized as follows:

Step 1 --An initial discussion of basic communication theory

culminating in the presentation of a basic model of public speaking

Step 2 --Preparation of students for public speaking performances follows. This usually includes discussion of topic selection and narrowing, research, outlining, organization, audio/visual aids as well as other areas considered significant.

Step 3 --Student presentations usually follow. The teacher selects the type and number of speeches to be delivered during the course of the semester.

Step 4 --Some kind of standard evaluation forms are used to assess student performances. Those forms are also used as a catalyst for discussions which usually follow the presentation.

As we look at the procedures used in the public speaking course, one fact stands clear. Despite student performances, this is a teacher-centered course. The teacher initiates the assignments. The teacher constrains how the assignments will be fulfilled (we usually specify that the speech be informative, persuasive, long, short etc.). The teacher (and this is most important) sets the standards by which the speech will be evaluated. We tell our students to be sensitive to the needs of the audience; and then we put a form in the hands of the audience and in a sense tell that audience how they should process the information.

It is not that students are ignored in the course; they are simply treated as passive recipients of the knowledge teachers have to give. What is interesting here to note is that all students are

treated in this manner--not just African American students. One of the reasons the model is being challenged at this time is because the teaching model and the evaluation assumptions are more inconsistent with African American cultural norms than they are from Anglo American norms.

No matter who the student is, Paulo Freire has a name for this kind to education. He calls it banking education. (Freire, 1971 p. 58) In this educational approach, teachers make deposits into passive receptacles and make withdrawals of information at exam time. Inherent in this type of education is a lack of respect for students and their ability to participate actively in directing their own education. Knowledge is in the possession of the teacher and its counterpart, ignorance, is the implied state the student (Freire, p. 59)

As an alternative, Freire offers problem-posing education.(Freire, 1970) In this approach students learn because they perceive a real and immediate need to do so. Teachers and students work together to formulate the best methods of acquiring what is necessary to succeed.

If I have convinced you thus far that realism is an inappropriate choice for the multicultural classroom and I have shown you that African American students fundamental way of viewing and interacting with the world differs from mainstream American culture, then certainly an alternative approach to public speaking is in order.

The alternative approach being proposed here is not meant to be a full scale course outline. The focus here is not on the content of the course, but rather the method. Any change in method

must be sensitive to students of difference. Toward that end the following methods are proposed.

--The course begins with statements of expectations by each student and the teacher. In her statement, the teacher should clarify the established parameters of the course. Upon hearing the students expectations the teacher will:

> --illustrate how the course will be able to meet the expectations expressed by students
>
> --explain why the course as structured to comply with college/university and department standards will be unable to meet an expectation
>
> --decide how the course could be adapted to meet a student expressed expectation

--In presenting the initial theoretical material, the teacher will acknowledge the cultural origins of the communication theories, place them into a social and political context and suggest that other understandings of communication exist that are also legitimate.

--In preparation for the term project, the skill components of the public speaking course will be covered. The teacher will serve as a resource to the class as they develop their strategies of presentation. Once the skill areas are surveyed by the teacher, individual class members can suggest topics to cover or skills to rehearse. Students will use the textbook as an reference for skills and use the teacher's knowledge to translate the text, or assimilate other information or just generally fill-in knowledge gaps. Additional intercultural communication source material should be made available.

--Early on in the semester students will be introduced to their term-long project.

> Each student will determine some issue in his/her life which might necessitate some public discourse. The student may choose a school-related issue, a community-related issue or a national issue. The main requirement is that the student care about the issue and that real outlets for the discourse exist.
>
> Students will be assigned a number of different (socio-cultural or socio-economic or etc.) audiences for their speeches. Based on class lecture material, library reserve room material and personal experiences, students learn about their different audiences. The goal of this assignment would be two fold: The student should (1) understand that people process information differently and (2) discover strategies best suited to the needs of each unique group.
>
> Discussion following the speeches will be conducted by the speaker and can focus on both content and process.
>
> Assessment of the speech will center on speaker effectiveness within the various contexts specified.

There would need to be some administrative considerations for this public speaking alternative to work. The class size would have to be closely regulated. No more than fifteen-twenty students should be enrolled in the course. The number must be controlled since a considerable amount of time is spent in class discussion. The room would need to be adaptable because a great deal of course time would be spent in small group discussions.

The text should be chosen with the audience in mind. The first consideration must be that the students can make sense of it. The text book should be viewed as just one of the tools students use to complete their projects. Since none of the major

text books adopt a multicultural stance on public speaking it be be incumbent upon the teacher to explain and reframe the content as fits the requirements of a multicultural classroom.

This alternative approach offers several real advantages. First, these methods allow all students to participate actively in the process of their own education. The process elevates students from simply being passive participants in the classroom to becoming more critical creators of discourse. Instead of simply learning forms (informative forms or persuasive forms), students focus on the content of their communication and the cultural context in which the communication takes place.

Second, the procedures outlined above offer a reasonable blend of institutional requirements and the needs of multicultural students in general and African American students in particular. The fundamentals are conveyed to the student. Students are presented with basic theory and then provided with a survey of necessary skills. This is the same as the traditional model. What's different is what is expected from students.

In the traditional model students are asked to give back what they have learned by performing their assigned speeches correctly. In traditional courses, while we may ask students to use current social or political topics our after-speech analysis focuses on processing the experience from a traditional perspective. Good speeches are those that follow the rules as we taught them.

In the alternative perspective, while rules count for some percentage of the grade (a bow to the structure) more important is that the speech worked. . . that it accomplished its goal.

In the traditional model the worth of the speech is ultimately determined by the teacher. In the alternative model the worth of the speech is determined by what it accomplishes. If an African American student can convince the audience using intuitive arguments rather that deductive or inductive arguments, then the speech is a success. If an Asian student can demonstrate flower arranging without listing steps, then the speech is a success.

A third advantage of the alternative model is that students learn tolerance for other styles of communication. When teachers condescendingly explain to students that a particular ethnic style of communication is inherently ok but can only be used outside of the classroom, then the real lesson for the day is intolerance. Other styles of communication are permitted and rewarded with acceptable grades in the alternative model.

An added advantage is that students learn to develop criteria of evaluation within those different styles. Often when we hear a mode of communication different than our own we are so overwhelmed with the difference that we are unable to judge its quality. We focus on the most obvious differences. With exposure to various styles of communication and discussion lead by an informed teacher it is possible to learn to evaluate critically different communication styles.

Finally, an advantage of the alternative model is that it allows students to work on important projects. So often as public speaking teachers we complain about the monotony of speeches. We wonder what has happened to our student's creativity. The answer is that our students are still creative. The problem is

that we give such constraining assignment, it looks as if we a merely giving them an opportunity to guess what's on our minds. Quite obviously, the further away the culture of the student is from the culture of the teacher, the more difficult it is to make these kinds of calculations. By working on the kind of public speaking project proposed in the alternative model, students are able to construct assignments which will not only illustrate their newly found skills, but also respond the real human needs they see around them.

In the traditional model the teacher designs exercises to allow the student to practice what has been learned. In the alternative approach, students are presented with problems to which they must discover solutions. What's more, because the problems are real and immediate, they contextualize public speaking. That is, the alternative approach allows student to see public speaking beyond the context of the classroom. Public speaking becomes more real and perhaps more useful.

General and Assorted Thoughts on Content

Though the focus of this paper is not on the content of public speaking as much as it is on the practice of teaching public speaking, a few words on content seem in order.

In addition to the normal communication theory opening to the public speaking course, a multicultural public speaking course ought to also discuss what happens to the communication model when the idea of culture is introduced. The presentation of some basic intercultural communication perspectives seems in order.

It also seems appropriate in a multicultural public speaking course to discuss the role of language in creating and sustaining the symbolic worlds in which we live. If the teacher, as suggested in the alternative model, establishes from the beginning that alternative models of communication exist then students should think about the implications of those differences. When an African American student first comes to a speech classroom, learning to speak "right" is probably what he/she expects to learn. Instead, the student should learn that the preference of certain phonemes over other phonemes is simply a choice, a social construction of a color biased society. Though this theoretical emphasis may seem more appropriate for upper division courses, multicultural students need to have their experiences validated. Offering them this theoretical orientation to communication, empowers students to use language to deconstruct the dangerous and oppressive myths which have misdirected or inhibited their educational progress.

Following these theoretical orientations to the course, the teacher should proceed to explain the students those communication norms which differ from culture to culture and within cultures. Eye contact is a great example here.

The general truth in mainstream Anglo-American culture is that maintaining direct eye contact is desirable in most speaking situations. However, as Erickson(1979) notes though African American speakers tend to look directly at the audience during a speech, they do not expect the same level of eye contact in return. Such a high return on the eye contact can be

interpreted as defiance or as a challenge. This sort of information is most useful to speakers and should become an integral part of all public speaking courses.

CONCLUSIONS

Earlier this year The National Institute Against Prejudice & Violence documented incidents of racial tension at 175 colleges since the 1986-87 school. (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1989, A28) The reality of racism exists on all college campuses. The question is what we can do about it.

The answer does not begin with the phrase, The administration should. . .Colleges and universities, as organizations, have a responsibility to provide as harmonious a campus living and learning atmosphere as possible. But this is only the beginning.

As teachers of communication courses we have the potential of reaching students in ways administrative directives could never hope to. It is thus our responsibility as teachers to do what we can to structure classroom learning experiences which address the problem of racism. Perhaps we deal best with campus racism by recognizing in ourselves the inappropriate cultural assumptions we make about the behaviors of our"different" students. Even more important we need to recognize the debilitating effect those assumptions have on our pedagogical practices.

In this paper I argue that the underlying philosophy of our current public speaking course is realism. As an operating philosophy realism does not tolerate difference very well; insisting,instead, on strict adherence to current methods of operation. I have also tried to show that those current methods

of educational practice in colleges and university do not actively take into account the learning and performance differences which are apart of the African American cultural experience. Finally I propose an alternative approach to public speaking which engages students in a process of developing speeches within various cultural contexts.

The unique qualities African American students bring to the classroom should be a great resource to a teacher to the other students and to the college/university. We celebrate the differences of our students by recognizing them and using them to enhance our knowledge of our subject areas. A true celebration of classroom differences validates not only the experience of African American students but of any student who perceives herself or himself to be somehow out of step with other members of the class.

REFERENCES

Anderson,J. A. (1988) Cognitive styles and multicultural populations. Journal of Teacher Education. 39(2-9).

Allen, W. R. (1988) Improving black student access and achievement in higher education. The Review of Higher Education 11(403-416).

Allen, W. R. (1988) Black students in U.S. higher education: Toward improved access, adjustment and achievement. The Urban Review 20(165-188).

Banks, J. A. (1988) Multiethnic education: Theory and practice. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Boykin, A.W. (1979) Psychological/behavioral verve: Some theoretical explorations and empirical manifestations. In A.W. Boykin, A.J. Franklin & J.F. Yates (eds.), Research directions of black psychologists. New YorK: Russell Sage Foundation.

Briggs, N. and Pinola M. (1987) A consideration of five traditional educational philosophies for speech communication. Communication Education 36(305-314).

Ehninger, D. Gronbeck, B. E., McKerrow, R. E., and Monroe, A. H., (1986) Principles and Types of Speech Communication. Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman & Company.

Erickson, F. Talking down: Some cultural sources of miscommunication of in interracial interviews. In A. Wolfgan ed. Nonverbal behavior: Applications and cultural implications. New York: Academic Press.

Gibson, J. W., Hanna, M. S. Huddleston, B. M. The basic speech course at U.S. colleges and universities: IV. Communication Education34(281-291).

Freire, P. (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Seabury.

Hilliard, A. (1976) Alternatives to I.Q. testing: An approach to the identification of gifted minority children. Sacramento: California State Department of Education.

Johnson, J.R. and Szczupakiewicz, N. (1987) The public speaking course: Is it preparing students with work related public speaking skills? Communication Education. 36(131-137).

Kochman, T. (1982) Black and white styles in conflict. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lang, M. (1988) The dilemma in black higher education: A synthesis of recent statistics and conceptual realities.

The Western Journal of Black Studies. 12(65-72).

Lucas, S.E. (1989) The art of public speaking. New York: Random House.

McDermott, R. P. and Gospondinoff, K. (1979) Social contexts for ethnic borders and school failure. In A. Wolfgang (ed) Nonverbal Behavior Application and Cultural Implication. New York: Academic Press.

Rubin, R.B. and Graham, E.E. (1988) Communication correlates of college success: An exploratory investigation. Communication Education 37(14-27).

Rosenberg, Leon E. A battle far from won. Yale November, 1988 p. 44-47.

Shade, B.J. (1982) Afro-American cognitive style: A variable in school success. Review of Educational Research. 52(219-244).

Smith, J.H., Simpson-Kirkland, D., Zimmerman, J.C. Goldenstein, E. and Prichard, K. (1986) The five most important problems confronting black students today. The Negro Educational Review 37(52-61.

Verderber, R.F. (1982) The challenge of effective speaking. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co..

Weiller, K. (1988) Women teaching for change: Gender, class and power. Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers.

Wolfgang, A. ed. (1979) Nonverbal Behavior: Applications and Cultural Implication. New York: Academic Press.

THE MODEL

Each of the three papers presented this afternoon has taken a look at basic communication courses from an African American perspective. We have analyzed and criticized the courses as they currently exist. We would now like to offer some suggestions for change. In fact, we would like to offer a a model for designing culturally sensitive communication courses.

PHASE ONE ORIENTATION

Before entering a multicultural classroom, teachers should be aware of their orientation--way of understanding-- cultural differences. What we propose is that teachers start the process of developing culturally sensitive courses by placing themselves on a cultural continuum. Drawing on the work of James Banks (1988) that continuum would be anchored on the left by THE CULTURAL PLURALIST, on the right by THE ASSIMILATIONIST and the center position would be held by THE MULTICULTURALIST. Each of these positions represents a way of looking at the role of culture in the classroom. Listed below are what might be considered belief statements generated by teachers grounded in each of the positions.

Cultural Pluralist Position--Ethnic groups possess unique characteristics and must band together and separate from the majority culture.

Multiculturalist Position--A person has <u>both</u> ethnic attachments and a common national culture competing for allegiance.

Assimilationist Position--Individuals of minority

groups must blend together into a common culture.

PHASE TWO ASSUMPTIONS

Once teachers have fixed their position on the cultural continuum, it now becomes necessary to identify the assumptions, or beliefs about what students should learn in the classroom, which logically follow from the orientation claimed.

> Cultural Pluralist Assumptions: Teachers should help students to function in their own culture and resist dominance and oppression from the majority culture.

> Multicultural Assumptions: Teachers should help students learn how to function effectively within shared cultures, ethnic cultures and other cultures, as appropriate.

> Assimilation Assumptions: Teachers should help students develop a commitment to the common national culture and its idealized goals.

Before the course takes final form it is important for teachers to make sure that their orientations are in fact consistent with the assumptions they take into the classroom. Imagine students confusion when a teacher claims to be a cultural pluralist (either explicitly or implicitly) and then structures a course in which the dominant culture's method of behavior is the only suitable method of behaving in class. Consistency between teacher's orientation and operating assumptions helps add clarity to the whole array of classroom interactions.

PHASE THREE PARTICULARIZE

At this point in the model teachers mold the content of the course to the orientation and assumptions identified. In other

words, teachers in each of the positions take the course at hand (ie. public speaking, interpersonal, organizational), look at their assumptions and try to figure out how the specific material in that subject area can help accomplish the teacher's assumed goals.

PHASE FOUR EVALUATION

The final phase of the model calls upon teachers to figure out how to assess the success or failure of students given the orientation, the assumptions and the specific course content taught. Teachers must clearly establish their priorities here. Once again, we believe that classroom success will be facilitated if the teacher is consistent. Nothing drives students more crazy than if a teachers grading policies are inconsistent with what has occurred previously in the class.

Referring once again to the continuum previously described, we see the following as most probable:

> Cultural Pluralism Evaluation: 100% of the grading criteria would be based ethnic learning.
>
> Multicultural Evaluation: This would need to be a sliding scale. The teacher would need to fix a percentage of the grading criteria for learning the privileged or dominant culture model. Another fixed percentage of the grading criteria would be given for adaptive and/or ethnic learning.
>
> Assimilation Evaluation: 100% of the grading criteria would be based on the privileged or dominant culture model.

Evaluation does not stop with the students. Teacher need to evaluate themselves as well. Consequently, evaluation also

includes assessing the success or failure of the orientation, assumptions and specific content taught in order to revise the course and begin again.